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Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health to the Thirsk Rural District Council for the Year 1896

Mr Chairman and Gentlemen

In presenting my Report for the year 1896, in respect to the Sanitary Condition and Concerning all influences affecting, or likely to affect, the Public Health within the District, it is pleasing to observe that in spite of the incursions of preventable diseases at different times and places a Satisfactory Condition of the Public Health has been maintained throughout the Year. And although the Year began with the necessity for a Special Report to the Central Authority the outbreak of Typhoid on which it was founded was mastered and the disease at an end almost before that Report was in the hands of their Lordships.

Both the Birthrate and the Deathrate proved to be low.

The Births registered are of Males 145, of Females 172, being a total of 317, and constituting a Birthrate of 24·35 per thousand of the population.

The Deaths occurring within the Year, are of Males 80, of Females 87, making a total of 167, and giving a Deathrate of 12·83 per thousand of the population.

No calculation is made for increase, although there is an actual increase of Births over Deaths of 150, because it is felt that any increase of Births within the Year is quite counterbalanced by the efflux of the adolescents to find that employment without the District which the

means within do not afford.

Concerning the causes affecting the Health of the District, it is found that there have been 66 cases of Zymotic Diseases notified during the Year, of which 6 have been fatal.

These have been distributed as follows. —

Notifications of Infectious Diseases

	Typhoid	Measles	Scarlatina	Diphtheria	Erysipelas	Total
Thirsk	16	3	2			21
Sowerby	7	3	2		1	13
Thrayton	1	3				4
Osgoodby	1					1
Laythorpe	1			4		5
Sessay	1					1
Sutton		6				6
Carlton		1				1
Kirby Hill			4	1		5
Breckonboro'			4			4
Kepwick			2			2
Sandhutton				1		1
Dalton Moor				1		1
South Kilvington					1	1
Total	27	16	14	7	2	66

The Deaths from Zymotic Diseases were as under –

	Typhoid	Measles	Diphtheria	Influenza	Syphilis	Total
Thirsk	2			1	1	4
Sowerby	1					1
Sessay	1					1
Sandhutton			1			1
Laythorpe		1				1
	4	1	1	1	1	8

The Zymotic Deathrate resulting from this figure of 8 is 6·14 per ten thousand of the population.

Typhoid Fever: – On the 17th January 1896 it became necessary to make a Special Report to the Local Government Board of a sharp and sudden outbreak of Enteric Fever, in the South side of Finkle Street Thirsk, which arose out of a single case reported on the 15th November 1895.

Between the 4th of January and 6th of February, 18 Cases were reported all arising out of, and around this centre.

Special attention was paid to the cleansing and flushing of the drains – the excreta from the infected cases was specially dealt with – the Towns water supply was laid on to the various Tenements – and other measures taken which resulted in a speedy and complete subsidence of the outbreak.

Later in the Year, 5 Sporadic Cases of Enteric, or Infantile, Fever were Notified in Sowerby.

One of the Cases, a young woman, had been visiting at Waterhouses in Durham a fortnight before the date of infection, a second case occurring

in the house in a sister who had been in attendance on the first case.

One case occurred at a farm in Osgoodby, and one at a farm near Thwayton; no local sanitary defects being apparent.

One fatal case occurred at Sessay. The person, a butler, had been attending Thirsk Races, where he was said to have partaken of three plates of mussels, but whether the eating of these molluscs had anything to do with his illness it would be difficult to say, although he had been apparently never well afterwards.

Concerning one case at Laythorpe, it was stated that immediately previous to her illness, the lady affected had been visiting in Hull, and had been made very sick and ill through a very bad smell, at the ticket collecting station at York, on her return journey. The premises were in good sanitary condition.

Measles:- Two cases of measles were the result of a return journey from Paris.

One, the result of a visit to Sunderland where a cousin had the disease at the time.

Six cases in one house were a direct importation from a Metropolitan Public School at the time of the Easter holidays.

One was in a member of the Police Force, the infection evidently having been caught at a time when he was away at a general inspection.

One case followed the visit of a friend from a distance, who was just recovering from the disease.

One was the result of a visit to Ripon to a house in which the disease was present.

In the remainder of the Sporadic cases the origin was not so clearly traced.

From these different foci of infection there was not any Spread of the disease, each fresh case being a new importation.

Scarlatina:- Of the fourteen cases of Scarlatina notified during the Year, four were in Shirley Hill; the infection having evidently been imported by a visitor from Pickering.

The disease was confined to the two houses to which it had originally been carried.

One case in Thirsk was a direct importation from Huddersfield.

Of four cases occurring in two families in Breckonboro' the origin was not very apparent, none of the children having been known to be exposed to the chance of infection; the only ground common to them being the School at Sandhutton which was attended by members of both families.

Inspection of the School showed that it was in good Sanitary Condition, but on a careful examination of the Scholars two were picked out of whom some suspicion was entertained, and on inspecting their record it was found that both had been away ill in June.

These children having been back to School for some time, there was nothing to be gained by taking further notice of them, or causing them to discontinue their attendance, and no further cases, actually occurred in that quarter.

A careful examination of the Sandhutton drainage was undertaken however, and it was found to be clear and in order.

Two cases arose in Hepwick village, supposed to have been caught in the first instance at a School outside of the District, where some of the Children were reported to have been suffering from sore throat.

Two cases occurred in a wayside cottage at Thorpfield after a visit of a relative from London.

One case occurred in Thirsk immediately after the November Fairs, the infection probably having been contracted among the Crowd of visitors.

After each separate outbreak, it is most satisfactory to be able to report, that no spread of infection occurred.

Diphtheria:= Of the seven cases Notified of this Zymotic, five were in the neighbourhood of Laythorpe and Thirby Hill.

The first case was reported at Laythorpe on the 10th November. On inspection of the premises in which it occurred, no sufficient cause or insanitary condition was apparent, but on finding that the child had been attending at Thirby Hill School, I went on to inspect the School premises, and enquired regarding any prevalence of sore throat or illness among the Children attending there, but found no indication of previous illness or lowering of School attendance.

Note was made, however, that the offices on the girls side were in an unsatisfactory Condition, and that as a rule they were not cleaned out more than once a year.

No ashes or disinfectants had been used to conceal or neutralize the offensiveness of the privy-contents. The boys conveniences were not so

bad, ashes having been used on that side.

The ashpit was uncovered and contained some foul liquid.

The conveniences although apparently quite modern were altogether too near the School premises, leaving no room for the healthy exercise of the girls, who were obliged to play on the road outside of the school grounds.

On the 15th November two new cases of Diphtheria were reported, one on the line side in Humberton Township, and one at Kirby Hill Windmill; being speedily followed by three other cases in Laythorpe and Kirby Hill.

I visited the Windmill and found that it was just without my District, the patient there was dead, and she like the others had attended the School.

My suspicions concerning the School were therefore confirmed, the only bond of connection between the various parts being the attendance at school, chiefly on the girls side.

Representations were made at once to the Managers of the School, to obtain if possible the cleansing and removal of the obnoxious offices.

This was speedily rendered possible by the generosity of the neighbouring Landowner, who has given sufficient additional space on the boundary of the school grounds to enable the conveniences to be removed quite to that boundary and the whole work has now been accomplished.

No further notifications have been received from that quarter of the District.

One fatal case of Diphtheria occurred in Sandhutton in June, and one mild case in a

woman occurred at Dalton Moor, in December.

In the course of the general inspection of the District, some improvements have been suggested and effected in different parts.

At Humberton the sanitary condition of the workmen's cottages there, was found to be most objectionable, the privy and drainage arrangements being both defective and bad.

All the suggested improvements there, have now been carried out.

At Lowesby, owing to the dryness of the summer, the village seemed to have been nearly deprived of water. There are 14 inhabited houses containing 57 inhabitants.

Two troughs, two private taps, and one well on farm premises furnish the water supply for the village. The troughs were at times unfit for use owing to cattle getting in to the water, and at the summer inspection the water had almost entirely disappeared.

Representations to the Landlord were attended to at once by him; a bountiful supply of good water from an available source has been brought to the village in pipes; and the place can now boast of a plentiful, excellent, and it is to be hoped an unfailing supply.

In regard to the question of the scavenging of Thirsk and Sowerby which seems to be still undecided, and which will never be satisfactorily accomplished till it comes under the direct control of the Sanitary Authority. I believe the work might be left with most advantage to the judicious supervision of the Sanitary Officers in regard both to the times and the manner of procedure, so as

best to suit the requirements and the habits of the District.

Concerning the ordinary Sanitary work of the Year the Nuisance Inspector reports, that

46 Ashpits have been thoroughly cleaned out
54 Privies thoroughly cleaned out
26 Accumulations of offensive matter removed
32 Private drains have been attended to
18 Township drains have been attended to
13 Watersupplies have been attended to
Cases of Fever attended supplied with disinfectants and disinfected when necessary.

Signed
John D. Buchanan M.D.
Medical Officer of Health
Thirsk 8th February 1897